

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

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(Section of the Library Association)*

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EDITORIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Next Meeting of the Association will be held on Wednesday, 12th November, at 3.30 p.m., in the Library of the Oxford University Press, Amen House, Warwick Square, E.C.4. Humphrey Milford, Esq., will take the chair, and Mr. W. Pugsley, of the Dagenham Public Libraries, will speak on "False Values." As this is the only afternoon meeting of the session will members please do their best to support it.

The Next Meeting of the Council will be held at 6.30 p.m., on Wednesday, 19th November, at the National Library for the Blind.

There will be a Dance on 26th November, as was mentioned in the Journal last month. The place is the Samson Clark Hall, 57-61, Mortimer Street, W.1. As this is the first social arrangement which has been made for this session members are asked to support it to the very best of their ability. Tickets are 4/-, including refreshments, and may be obtained from Miss E. M. Exley, St. Marylebone Public Library, Gloucester Place, W.1 or other members of the Council.

"Books to Read." It has been suggested that many assistants will wish to purchase copies of "Books to Read" for their own use. In order that such people may take advantage of the reduced prices offered by the Carnegie Trustees, the

Council have decided, if there is a demand, to buy fifty copies of "Books to Read," and to re-sell them to members at 5s. each, plus postage (9d.).

Will members wishing to take advantage of this offer send their names at once, on a postcard, endorsed "Books to Read," to the Hon. Editor. If the response to this offer is sufficient, an announcement will be made in the next *Assistant* and members will then be asked to send remittances. Until then, they are particularly asked to send only their names.

This offer applies only to members of the A.A.L. who genuinely want a copy of "Books to Read" for their own use.

Mundanus, Ltd.—We have received from Mundanus, Ltd., specimen copies of the first novel to be published at 3s. by this new associate company of Messrs. Victor Gollancz. As is generally known, the 3s. edition is to be sold to the general public and is paper covered. There is, however, an edition for sale to libraries only, which will be priced at 3s. 9d., and which should be of particular interest to librarians. The copy sent to us, *The Lion Took Fright*, by Louis Marlow, is very promising. The paper is identical with that used in the 3s. edition and, though it is not of such good quality as the paper of the average 3s. 6d. reprint, it is certainly better than that of the half-crown novel, for it is very much less absorbent and does not thumb so easily. The book is bound in orange linen of an attractive shade and although the boards are thin the binding should be good for at least fifteen issues. The margins are sufficient to allow of reasonable trimming by the binder. The type is excellent, as one would expect from the Camelot Press. Altogether, the format of the book is of a standard which makes it worthy of inclusion in any public library, and it compares very favourably with the continental novel both in the quality of its paper and the legibility of its type. We wish Mundanus, Ltd., every success and trust that other publishers will have the courage to emulate this venture.

Regional Libraries.—After the majestic reverberations of the Conference, comes a still small voice from Birmingham, where another sort of conference was held on the 8th October. This gathering, which was attended by some sixty representatives of county and local authorities in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Salop, and Herefordshire, met to consider the proposed West Midland Regional Libraries Scheme. And, *mirabile dictu*, something was done ! A committee has been appointed to explore details and there is every reason to hope that the near future will see the establishment of a system of co-operation, aided by a union catalogue, be-

tween the libraries in this area which, as well as making for increased efficiency and economy, will greatly relieve the burden imposed on the National Central Library. It is hoped that the co-operating libraries, by dependence only on each other for standard books, will enable the Central Library to specialise in the provision of rare out-of-print and foreign works which are at the moment beyond its pocket. It is obvious that this scheme, which we suspect will be none the worse for the absence of fanfares, will be of the utmost value to the areas concerned, and to the service given to the whole country by the National Central Library.

It should not be forgotten that, on a smaller scale, such schemes have been in existence for some time. The Birmingham Libraries have done yeoman service in helping their less fortunate neighbours by unofficial co-operation, while a system of mutual loans in East Anglia—product of the fertile genius of Messrs, Stephen and McColvin—has been working successfully for some time. A similar scheme, operating between the libraries of Brentford and Chiswick, Ealing and other West London systems, is expected to mature shortly.

The Library Association Record is issued free to all full members of the Library Association. We make this statement in response to request.

The 36th Inaugural Meeting was held in London on Wednesday, 8th October. A certain number of London and provincial members assembled on the steps of St. Paul's (a very draughty spot) and, when almost frozen, restored their circulations by walking up some thousands of stairs to the Stone Gallery. They then walked down again. These stalwarts then proceeded to Slater's, where the London members of the Council entertained provincial members to tea.

The actual Inaugural Meeting was held at the London School of Economics at 7 p.m. Mr. Leonard Chubb presided and the guests of honour were Miss Margaret Storm Jameson and Mr. Gurner P. Jones (the latter ineffectively protesting). Before calling on Miss Jameson, the President paid tribute to the magnificent work done for the A.A.L. by Mr. Jones, and, on behalf of his many friends in the Association, presented him with an engraved plate, which Mr. Jones undertook to fix to the desk which, with a Persian rug and an easy chair, was the gift of the Association upon his retirement from the office of Hon. Secretary. Mr. Jones thanked the Association in a rather moving, but characteristically happy speech.

The address by Miss Margaret Storm Jameson, which was then delivered, is printed on another page.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our note on subscriptions last month was misleading. I am sorry. It was due to the too lavish use of the editorial blue pencil. The position with regard to subscriptions is this:—

1. Full members of the Library Association pay nothing to the A.A.L. If you belong to the Library Association and yet received a demand note from your Divisional Hon. Treasurer notify him or her that you are a full Library Association member.

2. Subscriptions to the A.A.L. for other than full members of the Library Association are:

Fellows of the A.A.L., 13/-.

Members of the A.A.L., 9/-.

Associates of the A.A.L., 5/-.

such amounts covering the period from 1st October, 1930, to 31st December, 1931. Thus renewal of subscription will be due 1st January, 1932.

3. Members whose case is met by 2, but who will become full members of the Library Association on 1st January, 1931, shall not pay those subscriptions, but shall pay:—

Fellows of the A.A.L., 2/6,

Members of the A.A.L., 2/-,

Associates of the A.A.L., 1/-.

On 1st January next the Library Association will call upon these members for the appropriate Library Association subscription.

It is essential that members proposing to join the Library Association at 1st January, 1931, state so when remitting to their Area Hon. Treasurer, and it is essential that they inform Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith. AR. T. AUSTING, Hon. Treasurer.

*THE FUTURE OF THE NOVEL

By STORM JAMESON.

I feel some diffidence in addressing you on the future of the novel—arising partly from a natural sense of my incompetence but chiefly from the thought that it is so much merely *my* future I am discussing. It wouldn't, would it? matter very much to you if no more fiction were written at all, if Hodder ceased from troubling and Hutchinson was at rest. I suppose that you would really feel profoundly relieved if you heard to-night that novelists had entered on a self-denying ordinance

*Address delivered at the 36th Inaugural Meeting, held at the London School of Economics, on the 8th October, 1930.

to write nothing for twenty years. No more novels to crowd your shelves with their pages, light and ephemeral, but not, alas, ephemeral enough. No more money to be wasted on books that go out of fashion in a few months, sometimes in a few weeks, after they are printed. What a merciful clearance! I should think you must often feel like offering some of us a pension to cease pouring out our trivial yet space-consuming works. Indeed I myself, if I were assured of a modest but safe and regular pittance would gladly oblige you in this. If it were not, in short, that I write to live.

I take it as doubly kind in you that in spite of all you must—and so justly—have against me you yet asked me here to speak to you. If I can deserve your kindness by predicting a safe end to your troubles and a speedy end for myself and my fellow spiders, spinning our webs over your shelves, I will, I promise you.

The course of English fiction has been described so often as a stream that I ought rather to apologise for inviting you, at this late day, to re-visit it. The banks have been trodden nearly bare and the scenery is as familiar to you as the path. But perhaps, if we can arrive at a point a little in advance of the track, we may stumble on a new prospect—or if that is too much to hope, see the old one from a different angle.

This stream, now. It has always had a double current. Sometimes the two have flowed side by side, nearly separate and distinct, at times they mingle, at others, again, one current has swelled and spread out, forcing the other to flow beneath the surface of the stream, nearly unheeded. Of these two, the novel of character has perhaps never been better than second favourite in our hearts. On the whole we have preferred the novel in which the stress has fallen on action—action sometimes quite irrelevant to character, a pell-mell of scenes and incidents set down mainly for their own sake, because they are interesting or impressive or typical of English idiosyncrasy or comic. *Pamela* and *Clarissa* may wring withers in their day but a later day views them with horror or mirth. But *Tom Jones* retains his hold on our affection—not for his rascally self but because the fields and copses in which he found good hunting—it might be a hare or a buxom young woman—and the streets through which he walked, brawling or laughing or staring, are still part of our English consciousness. It is always the same. For one priggish and peculiar person who really prefers Thackeray—I confess to you that I am one of these—there are at least ten to whom the rich spread of Dickens is a sufficient feast. Why not? It is right that it should be so—since we English have always been less concerned with the springs of action than with the action itself and what came of it. We like better to watch a man reveal his soul in doing, than to listen while he unpacks it in thoughts and words. So much so that it is nearly impossible to find a novel which is all character to set beside one which is all action. Even the *Man of Feeling* is not without his precise moments. It is—if I may vary the figure with which I began—in the traditional novel only a question of stress. In Thackeray the stress falls on the development of character, but this is not to say that nothing ever happens to *Clive Newcome* and *Pendennis*. All manner of things happen to them; yet what interests us is less what they are doing than what they are becoming and the splendid social panorama in which they move. In Dickens the stress falls naturally on the events, which follow each other in a lively and unparalleled profusion. His characters are either fully developed and labelled—by some trick of speech or gesture—when we first meet them, or they remain forever young and undeveloped. Under all the knocks and turns of his fate Mr. Micawber keeps his label.

And David Copperfield when we leave him is still the little boy who admired Steerforth and let the waiter do him out of his half pint of ale and chops. Put crudely, Dickens was more interested in characters and incident and Thackeray in character and scene, and both of them packed into their novels all kinds of additional bits and pieces, philosophic reflections, social satire, moral purposes, anything they had by them at the time, and both are in the tradition, swimming along with the main stream of English fiction, which runs clear out of the eighteenth century—its remoter springs need not trouble us—to this day and moment.

The real thing about any novel in the tradition—whether you call it a novel of character or of events, Jane Austen or Captain Marryat—is that it is a fairy story of real life. It must have nothing of the inconclusive and unsatisfying aspect of actual life, which neither begins nor ends and is perpetually defeating mere human logic. It begins and ends, it obeys a logic of its own, its characters are decisively rounded off, married or buried or what not. The sum of it is either satisfaction at the sight of happiness suitably bestowed or an understanding, momentary if you like, of the tragic sense of life. The fairy tale need not end happily to give satisfaction. Tess dies. So, to compare small things with great, does Tessa in *The Constant Nymph*. We have derived pleasure from our meeting with Alice although the end has been tragic—or pitiful. Both heroines, the Victorian and the modern one, have satisfied some hunger in us. What the nature of this hunger is and what—besides fairy stories—can satisfy it, and why fairy stories do, and whether the appetite is constant, are questions beyond the moment.

There has always been the main stream and there have always been neglected backwaters and tributary streams, some of these mere trickles lost in the sand and others that are broad shining rivers. We northerners love classifying and arranging and labelling, so let us fix names to the broadest of these streams. They have, you will remember as we go, a double importance for us, since not only are they perpetually feeding and enriching the main stream, but it is easy to imagine a day and a circumstance in which one or other of them might comfort a world that has grown tired of fairy tales. A world I shall not see and do not care over much to think of.

While I run here and there, pointing and labelling, you will not forget that however freakish it is a novel must have some qualities that belong to the tradition. It need not tell a story, and its characters may be mere pegs or gestures, but it must have *some* recognisable characters and they must do or think or feel something—even if at the end of the book you are left wondering what it could have been. A novel of ideas does not consist only of ideas: if it did it would not be a novel at all. And some novelists who imagine themselves to be more passionately concerned with their ideas than with events or characters are overridden by their good genius and compelled against their will to create living bounding characters. It cannot be more than a month since I read *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* and agreed fervently with Mr. Wells's views. But what remains with me is not any one of those estimable doctrines but the figure of Sir Bussy Woodcock saying "Gaw" to the noblest shibboleths of history.

Still—there is a perfectly recognisable kind, which we can call, if we like, the novel of ideas. Under this head come all those novels which were written not because their author was compelled to describe the events that befell certain men and women and what came of it, but because he was compelled by certain ideas or faiths or merely by certain indignations that possessed themselves of his imagination. His novel

becomes a vehicle for the passions of his mind and heart and only in the second place a comedy or a tragedy reflecting or revealing life through the medium of a story about what happened next. The fairy tale element is thus weakened or destroyed, and this accounts, partly, for the comparative unpopularity of the novel of ideas. Ideas—until they have been born again in action—are dry fare. If they are significant enough the novel will get its public, but it will be a small public compared with the public that is always waiting for a good enough fairy story, for *The Constant Nymph* and *The Good Companions*.

The two modern masters of this kind are Mr. Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence. Mr. Huxley creates characters. Few of his people are pleasant and some of them are mere gestures of his devouring indignations. His range is extremely limited, since he rarely moves beyond a narrow highly-educated society which contains at least one modern scientist, one artist, writer, critic, painter or what not, and one promiscuous young woman. The same characters appear again and again in his books, under different names and shapes. This has the curious effect of making them less rather than more real. The finest thing he has ever written concerns a character—Uncle Spencer—who does not fit into this gallery of familiar portraits. The conversation has all the point and ripeness of conversations we imagine taking place on the Chelsea side of Parnassus. It is—to borrow a theatrical term—all fat. The same dislikes, the same speculations, the same loathings bob up again and again. Mr. Huxley has a great deal of heart, a wry humour and a Dickensian eye for grotesqueness. What gives his novels their peculiar flavour and justifies us in thrusting them into the pigeon hole labelled Novel of Ideas is the fact that all these admirable qualities of his can only get out by one door. They all have to squeeze their way past his tyrant intellect. Every genuine emotion that shows its head is seized upon by this subtle monster, questioned, bullied, its word doubted, and finally sent upon its way in so flattened and chastened a mood that it is never good for much again. When his intellect is not draining his real emotions of life it is inventing others to torment him. He is nothing if not a thinker. He can think himself into anything and it is only by thinking that he becomes anything. In a recent book of essays he erects a working philosophy which he labels life-worship. The life-worshipper, he says, "is at one moment a positivist and at another a mystic: now haunted by the thought of death . . . and now a Dyonisian child of nature." No man, by taking thought, can become a child of nature, even for five minutes. Mr. Huxley's mind is at its old tricks with him.

With such a mind, cultured, tortuous, sceptical almost against his will, self-mocking and self-tormenting, with all his other gifts of humour, irony, and sharp if limited observation, it would be surprising if his novels were other than they are, the ripe and rather acid fruit of a mind which is as incapable of falling below a certain level of accomplishment as it is of forgetting itself.

D. H. Lawrence was ridden not by ideas but by an idea, a faith—if you like, a religion. He would have known just what was biting Mr. Huxley. He perceived and hated the modern disease of mind—mind divorced from feeling, mind pouring its sands over the instinctual sources of life, drying them up, sealing them. He believed—and no doubt he is right—that a man or a nation or a civilisation which has forgotten how to draw on the deep unreasoned sources of its being is dying. The time came, all too soon, when this passionate belief of his, and his struggles to find words for the profoundest and least expressible of feelings, began to cloud his work. He had almost every gift of the novelist, sympathy, observation, the story-teller's magic. The men and women in his earliest

books are human beings, deeply observed and known. *Sons and Lovers* is one of the finest novels of our age. No modern novelist could create character more surely and richly. From the very first he was master of an admirable narrative style, vivid, nervous, and concrete. And no more able than any other could have been to reduce the terrific emotions of the unconscious within the form of a novel. He drags them up and there they lie, deep sea monsters, gasping and quivering, dwarfing into unreality the merely human characters of his books. He is the best witness I could produce before you to the truth that the *first* business of a novelist is with the deeds and destinies of men and women. He may enrich his novel with every other kind of interest, but if he has neglected that one essential duty, or pushed it into the second place, he has written for the few. For the elect, if you like. It does not signify. No novelist ever *chose* to write only for the elect. He was driven to that lonely honour by some lack in him, of sympathy or comprehension. Or by an obsession. Mr. Huxley cannot, D. H. Lawrence could not, help himself.

Ideas and creeds are not the only things that distract a novelist from his duty. Or console him for his innate inability to fulfil it—which is it? A too passionate interest in the *way* he is writing will draw off his energies just as fatally. Would he allow them to be distracted in this way if he were really possessed by his subject? Possibly not. Not one of the great novelists has ever taken more trouble over his writing than was necessary to make it move. The important thing, for Fielding and Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, was to tell what happened, to explain this event or that person, not to make experiments in style. I hesitate to suggest that it would be impossible for a novelist to write a novel of the major importance of *Esmond* with the exquisite attention to the rhythm of words and phrases given by Virginia Woolf to her *Mrs. Dalloway*. All one can say is that it has not yet happened. There is *Ulysses*, of course—but though *Ulysses* is a monument of industry and art (like the Albert Memorial) and a notable experiment in method I am not sure that it ought to be considered as a novel. Leaving Mr. Joyce suspended between fiction and the epic, let us put it that no novelist has ever yet written a book on the scale of *War and Peace* in a style one tenth as rich in subtle beauties as the style of *Orlando* and *To The Lighthouse*. So far as the history of fiction goes it is scarcely rash to venture that a preoccupation with the subtleties of style has only once been found in company with the superabundant vitality which produces great novels. The one instance is not absolutely four-square. Even with *Tristram Shandy* I do not feel that Sterne actually cared *more* about his style than about the characters of Walter Shandy, Uncle Toby and his Corporal Trim, and Pastor Yorick. I do feel that the chief preoccupation of Mrs. Virginia Woolf is less with what she writes than with how she writes it. All her gifts, of humour, insight, and perception, are bent this way first. If she had had a greater vitality—she has indeed not much—would she have been able to hold it down to this delicate work, or would it have run away with her and produced great novels instead of charming ones? I don't know. When she wrote *The Voyage Out* she was less absorbed in the intricacies of prose rhythm than when she wrote *Orlando*. *Orlando* is a splendid piece of prose writing. *The Voyage Out* is a very fine novel.

It does not seem to matter what the gifts are that a novelist offers us in place of a well-rounded story of men and women loving, hating, laughing, enduring, and striving, he is doomed to comparative failure. Nothing will do but the story. There is a school of novel-writing which

concerns itself primarily with what it calls real life. Disdaining the fairy story element which is common to all the great novels, from *Esmond* to *War and Peace*, this school sets out to tell the truth about life—not to explain life, not to make a story of it, not to show it, but to show it up. This impulse has produced some grim pieces of writing which have merit—but it is not a literary merit. The truth about life is that it is unbearable and that we bear it. The process of bearing it wrings from us tears, laughter, and impulses of extraordinary complexity, meanness and nobility. Nothing of all this gets into the novels of the life-as-it-is-school except the meanness and the tears. In the end they are little better than inverted or perverted fairy stories, written not to amuse but to remove the scales from our eyes, to instruct. This is really what damns them. The first duty of an artist—novelist, poet, what you like—is to give pleasure. Schoolmasters and moralists instruct. Artists please—or should. If they instruct too, it is by the way. No novelist whose first object is instruction, the showing-up of life, can succeed as a novelist. The novelist can show life up if he likes and as much as he likes—but only on condition that he first shows it. In all its richness, its irony, its terror, and its infinite variety.

There are more kinds of novels—outside the tradition—than we have labels for, and more than are worth labelling. Let us hurry across a wide territory, dotted with objects of interest to curio-hunters, and come directly to the latest development—the enormous interest shown in recent years in biography and autobiography. Few novels have been more successful than Mr. Lytton Strachey's life of Queen Victoria and Mr. Robert Graves's life of himself. At first sight this seems a flat contradiction of everything I have said about the popular affection for fairy stories. If it happened, it is not a fairy story. How explain the almost simultaneous success of *Goodbye to All That* and *The Good Companions*? There is only one probable explanation, and that is that the appetite for fairy stories has all along been an appetite for something else. Fairy stories contain what will satisfy it. So do genuine autobiographies. And now I must venture my head on a definition of this appetite which swallows Mr. Graves and Mr. Priestley in one mouthful.

There are certain things to be said before I rush in where a wiser man would hesitate. One concerns the modern biography. It is actually a less striking instance of the emergence of a new taste than the autobiography. In form it approximates to the novel. It can be read as a novel, and no doubt often is. Queen Elizabeth is an historical character, but as portrayed by Mr. Lytton Strachey in *Elizabeth and Essex* there is very little in degree and nothing in kind to distinguish her from the heroine of any psychological romance. In fact, as soon as a writer of biography abandons his documents and indulges in what is charitably called a reconstruction of his subject's thoughts and feelings—basing it not on documents but on an application of the general principles of psychology or psycho-analysis—he ceases to be a biographer and becomes a romancer, a novelist. His success—when he is successful—with his public is due very little to any historical merit his work may have. Some modern biographies have remarkably little. It is due partly to a natural human curiosity about other people—what was Queen Victoria really like?—but mainly to the author's skill in telling a story and imagining a character, to his skill as a novelist, in short. In America this fact is quite clearly understood—a recent biography published over here under the name of its subject was renamed, for an American public *The Story of a Great Passion* and under that title of romance achieved an unexpected success.

We are on quite different ground with autobiography. Here, too, no doubt, curiosity accounts for a fair proportion of readers. We rush to read Mr. Robert Graves's book very much in the spirit with which our ancestors grasped at the ballads offered for sale under the gallows at Tyburn—the highwayman's last confession. But there is more in it than that. Remember that Mr. Graves is not writing a fairy story. He is telling the truth about himself and his life. So he says and we believe him. In the second place, Mr. Graves is not a great figure. To the general public he must—before the appearance of *Goodbye to All That*—have been quite unknown. Anyone might feel: "How I should like to know what Queen Victoria really felt about Mr. Disraeli." But no one except his friends—and he had probably already told them—could have been saying: "How I should like to know what Mr. Robert Graves felt when he went to school and when he got married." Yet all these thousands of persons who have never heard of him fall over one another to procure copies of his book and read it and we may suppose enjoy it, for it has many qualities. If it had been a novel and published as a novel it would scarcely have had a success. It is not a taking novel. We are forced to conclude that it was read by so many people precisely because it was *not* a fairy story, but a true relation of the life, to his thirtieth year, of one obscure young poet. Why? What hunger, apart from what can have been only the mildest curiosity, did it satisfy in them?

We have not come suddenly to the modern craze for autobiography, though, like so many other growths, it has been hastened in the forcing house of the War. There are the historical instances. And over a long period the novels written by clever young men and women have become increasingly autobiographical in content. This is not the same thing as saying that a novelist draws on his own thoughts, feelings and experience for his books. On what else could he draw? He may even put as much of himself into a book as Dickens put into *David Copperfield* and yet escape the charge of writing a disguised autobiography. In *David Copperfield* Dickens created a character which stands on its own legs and has its own real and separate existence in the world of literature, as real, in the same kind real, as *Tess* or *Lear* or *Falstaff*. The autobiographical novels of our young Parnassians have never, so to speak, severed the umbilical cord that relates them to their authors. They do not stand four-square. They remind one of that dreadful stuff, ectoplasm, emitted by certain mediums in conditions of trance. They have no independent existence, no principle of life.

I should be doing Mr. Graves an injustice if I implied that his book bore a resemblance to these ectoplasmic little novels. It does not. But our minds have been prepared for such books as his, for a burst of frank and undisguised self-portraiture, by a cloud of little books in which the self portrait is thinly veiled, and by one big book—Proust's long novel. This is not the time for a discussion of Proust's work. It is enough if I recall that this writer sets out to recover—by a method he takes pains to explain—the experiences, physical, mental, and emotional, of his past, and that the process reveals an indiscriminate pile of objects, like the contents of a rifled tomb, some beautiful, others repulsive and others merely valueless.

It is clear that we are in the presence of a natural force. All this autobiography is not an induced growth. It was coming of itself before the War, by flooding men's minds with an experience too vast to be readily translated into fiction, made it inevitable. There are any number of attendant circumstances. One of them is the gradual dissolution of habits of personal reserve and dignity. This began long before the

War. The War was only the last and fiercest solvent. When it was over we found that we had been made bankrupt for an incredible number of the most superb sentiments. We had—so to speak—kept them in hand during a long rainy day only to find, when it was all over, that their purchasing power had dropped to nothing. We have distrusted superb sentiments ever since. We are no longer much impressed by final gestures. The sight of one of our friends taking up a dignified attitude does not fill us with respect. It only makes us think him an ass, an amusing or (oftener) a boring ass. In the same way we prefer to look through our legs at the heroic and the noble. We like them better from that angle. There are still some people who make dignified gestures and admire dignity itself. They are almost all elderly persons or a Sitwell. The others put off dignity at the same time that they put off their belief in a number of things that once seemed to us solid and valuable and now do not. The modern spirit wears a grinning mask and respects nothing very firmly. There is therefore little to discourage a writer from making public any and every detail of his personal life that seems to him important. And nothing in the spectacle to shock a modern mind. All things considered, why should we be shocked? The War was followed by the Peace and we have outlived both. Nor is any published autobiography so shocking, in the narrow sense of the word, as some of the scenes and jokes in any successful revue. No. What is surprising about *Goodbye to All That* is not the impulse that made Mr. Graves take us into his confidence about himself and his war and his marriage, and not the fact that his gesture fails to shock us, but the fact that some thousands of us found the book as interesting, exciting, and satisfying as—let us say—the last novel by Mr. Bennett. That is really significant.

The finest achievement of modern autobiography, and the one that excuses and (you may say) sanctifies any others, is the war book proper. Here again it is not strange that a writer who survived the War should feel that his experience was too tremendous and too crushing to be recast in the form of fiction. It is not surprising if he feels that what happened—to him and others—was in itself so significant that it should be put down exactly as it happened, without alteration of tone or shape or colour. If he feels, in short, that nothing can do justice to the War except an accurate recollection of his experience. None of this is strange—though *War and Peace* stands up to testify that it is possible to write a great war book in the form of fiction. What is strange is the involuntary testimony of critics and readers to the feeling that, compared with a truthful war book, a war novel belongs to an inferior order of literature. This feeling has nothing whatever to do with the fact—indisputable—that no war novel yet written is of the quality of *Under-tones of War* or *The Middle Parts of Fortune* or Herbert Read's brief account of the retreat of March, 1918. So strong is the feeling that even when a war book is written ostensibly as a novel we refuse to be put off by appearances. It is natural and easy enough to read for "George Shertson" Siegfried Sassoon, but *The Middle Parts of Fortune* was surely meant to be read as a novel. Yet so anxious are we to justify it as literature that we say: "Of course Bourne is Manning himself." Mr. Squire, reviewing the *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* in the "Observer," makes a special merit of the fact that the book has not undergone what he calls "artificial sorting." Yet it used to be supposed that the whole duty of the artist towards his material was to sort and arrange and re-create it. Why this change of attitude? Is it only that we regard the War as an event, an experience, too special to be tampered with by art? That of itself is a new and sufficiently striking doctrine in criticism.

But perhaps it is something more. Perhaps it is not only in the mind of writer and critic that truth begins to seem not merely stranger but more valuable and more satisfying than fiction? These veracious recitals—of war as one man saw it, of life as one man has lived it—do they satisfy an appetite which until now has felt itself fully fed by fairy stories only because nothing else was offered?

The value of these war books is outside the question and indeed past question. I am inclined to believe that the only literature of value left by my generation will be its war books. None of the younger novelists, not even Mr. Priestley or Mr. Huxley, has written a novel which—regarded as literature—is in the class of *Undertones of War*, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, and Herbert Read's two short books, *In Retreat* and *Ambush*. Certain books on a lower level than theirs—I instance *Medal Without Bar* (a novel) and *A Subaltern's Diary* (not a novel)—were infinitely more worth while writing than certain other post-war books which have achieved vast success. All these books have a quality in common. Some are written with a fine and deliberate feeling for prose-style, others are simple narratives or diaries. And all of them record not merely the actual experiences of their writers but the events of that period in their lives when they were most sharply and consciously alive. Nothing that has happened since the war is so real to these men as it was and is. These memories are real. These memories, with a few thoughts and dreams of that time, are all they have to leave of themselves which is real.

And now I cannot any longer avoid grappling with the question: What is this appetite that swallows me a Priestley, a Blunden, and a Graves with equal zest? And, nearer home, what will become of the fairy story with this young dangerous rival competing for favour and place? For the moment nothing. The fairy story still charms and satisfies—as witness the instant success of *The Good Companions*. That does not make less significant the fact that the other books—the true stories—are being read and in increasing numbers written. A tiny instance caught my eye this morning. If, some years ago, a young Mr. Waugh had gone on a Mediterranean trip he would have worked his experiences into a novel. It would never have occurred to him that anyone beyond his nearest friends would be interested in his merely personal adventures and reflections. To-day he does not hesitate to publish just these and to expect and to receive the notice of critics and the attention of a not negligible public. The instance, like the book, is trivial but it has a point.

All the evidence I should need to offer other than a diffident answer to my questions is not in my hands. Some of it is in yours. I do not know, for instance, whether the same person or the same sort of person is reading Sassoon and Priestley. I do not know whether age, or sex, has anything to do with a preference for one over the other. But what is clear enough is that Mr. Graves and Mr. Sassoon are both, in their degree, satisfying a hunger and a need. What, then is this hunger?

It can, I think, be no other than the hunger for life and more life, which has supped full of fairy tales from Defoe to the latest popular novel, and is now flinging itself eagerly on newer fare. Biography and autobiography—the true story of Queen Victoria and the true story of Mr. Sassoon—it is all one to George Smith and Mary Smith, who have never yet had the chance to live that rich splendid exciting life they might have lived—if things had been different, if times had changed, if a miracle had some time happened. All their dreams and their vague inarticulate desires—an uncharted country behind the narrow road that

stretches between being born Mary Robinson and dying Mary Smith—are released in them when they can get a glimpse into other people's lives, into the life of Elizabeth Bennet, Becky Sharp, David Copperfield, Jane Eyre, Lorna Doone, Soames Forsyte, Kipps, and Mr. Polly. Until just now fiction was the one and only gate by which the common man could slip beyond the narrow limits of his own world, into a world peopled by all the strange, the passionately interesting creations of the novelist. The older biographies were no use to him. They were as dull and discreet as tombstones, giving nothing away. Nothing to feed a hungry mind and starved desires. Now to the characters of fiction and to its myriad imagined worlds are being added characters from the actual world, obligingly self-confessed.

I imagine that we are only at the beginning, the first springs, of autobiographical literature. The small trickle will swell and broaden and take on all the characteristics of a main stream. There is no reason why, once a man has begun to write about himself, he should not go on doing it for a very long time. Marcel Proust spent the whole of his writing life on his autobiography. Mr. Sassoon has already published two books and Mr. Graves is about to publish his second. Why not? Neither of the English writers has plunged as deep into himself as Proust did. Compared with his, their self-portraits are mere sketches, a superficial scratching of the ground. We learn less about Mr. Graves, for all his candour, than Mr. Strachey tells us about Elizabeth. On the other hand, in one case we have the subject's word for what we learn and in the other we have only Mr. Strachey's. We know now that every strange, terrible, and fantastic force in the world round us has its parallel in the world within. We have devoted centuries to the exploration of the outer world. The inner world lies all before us, a new Eden, through which to take our solitary way. Impossible to foresee, with any degree of comfort, the literature that will spring from this nearly untapped source. Certainly it will have a profound and disturbing effect on fiction proper: some novelists will react violently against it—I imagine a later Priestley battling desperately against the temptation to look within for riches; others will put themselves to school there, and from exploring their own hearts and minds with an unashamed thoroughness will develop a new and perhaps startling conception of character. Incidentally, seen from this angle, *Ulysses* becomes a portent of another kind. One way or other, the effect on novelists of the new departure will be profound.

And perhaps, after all, there is nothing new in our appetite for these true narratives and accounts. If you are reading stories to a child as like as not he will cry when you end: Is it true? Did it happen? Later, he begins to understand that the stories he reads in books have never happened, and his mind accepts uncomplaining the miracle of "as if" the successful novelist writes as if what he wrote about had really happened, and the mind of the common man performs, without knowing it, the other half of the miracle. The fairy story comes to life. But what if it were really true? That would be something different—satisfying and exciting in a different way. When a Mr. Lytton Strachey promises to tell us the truth about Queen Victoria and a Mr. Graves to tell us truthfully about himself we crowd round to listen. It is still a story, this time true. This time it happened.

But suppose the written word were nothing but a compensation, something we thought of to fill out the shortness and poorness of our lives? To be sure, that "nothing but" includes all romance, all beauty, all strangeness. Yet for all that it may be that life needs only to be-

come as full, rich, and free for the many as it now is for the few, and the whole lovely glittering world of fiction, with its Rosalinds and its Tesses, its Clive Newcomes and its Sam Wellers, will vanish like the ragged edges of a dream when the dreamer wakes. And no one will have time or interest to listen when a Mr. So-and-So unpacks his soul in words and a Miss Such-an-one tells the whole world what she would once have whispered to a friend or kept secret. Perhaps literature is a child which is bred in hardness and nursed by illusion. Perhaps we do not dream except when we are unhappy. The race of man has been only a little time on earth. It is still early. When the sun is fully up man may have forgotten that it used to be pleasant to listen to tales and fairy stories. But by then this room will be less substantial than Childe Roland's tower and we ourselves no more real than Hamlet. And what case the world may be in without fairy tales will not trouble us.

STORM JAMESON.

VALUATIONS

By STANLEY SNAITH

Apologia

Pity me if you will, who for my sins
Must tirelessly and scrupulously burrow
In class-lists, catalogues and bulletins
Duller and deader than the works of Thoreau.
And though I seem to favour violent tactics,
Peppering my page with jest and jeer and gibe,
These are no more than desperate prophylactics
'Gainst the mephitic dulness of my tribe.
And were it not for this astringent, shrewd
Derision and irreverent caterwauling
I too should lose my sanity; surrender
To those indigenous cankers of our calling:
Its cant, its snobbery, its decrepit splendour,
Its irremediable hebitude !

Manchester's Manifesto

Manchester. Annual Report, 1929-30.

I have the privilege which Dorothy Osborne permitted to Sir William Temple—I chide when I please. But there is very little to chide in this report; and not much to cheer about, either. The confection may not be very toothsome, nor is it served up with any great finesse. But all the statutory ingredients are there. The issues are thriving like the young Gargantua; the libraries have been repainted; a certain number of books have been rebound (whether with a Cobden-Sanderson refinement we are not told); and, for some occult reason, the information is vouchsafed that "the total number of cards in the different catalogues in the buildings at Piccadilly is 489,991." Under Mr. Jast's skilful ministrations the libraries, like the royal offspring, are doing as well as could be expected. But stop. What is this? "The two desiderata of the [Music] Library, which are a satisfactory detailed classification and a complete and adequate card catalogue, are still in the future." This is a strange and poignant confession: and one volunteered quite casually and without any apology, mark you! I commiserate Manchester's music-lovers (who, with her dramatic enthusiasts, have helped to put Man-

chester on the aesthetic map) upon such cavalier treatment. However, it will perhaps console them to know that a new central library is being hatched; the progress of which, though still in the foetal stage, the Committee views "with immense satisfaction." As the model, as illustrated, is not at all repugnant, I for one will not grudge them their satisfaction. (The façade is, however, something of a pillar-fight; it only needs a bunch of twopenny flags to out-Selfridge Selfridge's). But the photograph of the young people's room at Gorton West is very refreshing. Broadly considered, this report is a not inconsiderable record of progress and a favourable augury for the future. But what paper! What typography! It is as if the *Archduke Trio* were played on a Jew's harp.

The Magicians of Croydon

Croydon. Reading in Croydon, 1929-30.

The bluff, uncompromising type; the paper, thick as an egotist's skull (see *The Library World's* recent reference to my own); the general smack of thoroughness and achievement: all seemed to caution me to treat this aldermanic volume with respect. "None of your hanky-panky," they seemed to growl. Very well, none of my hanky-panky. In my desperate dowsing I have at last struck a spring. This is, to put it mildly, an unimpeachably competent report. If you want to know what miracles Croydon performs in the course of a year, they are all to be found within these covers. Palinurus may have nodded at the helm, but there is no nodding at Croydon. Nor winking either. A singularly humourless place. But Croydon sits, a latter-day Saint Simeon, on the topmost pillar of library achievement, and has every right to its solemnity. Its issues total a million and a half. 84,618 readers' tickets are in force. 324 story hours and lectures have been given. (Observe the meticulous precision of my statistics this month). One does not need to be a Mr. Smeeth, and work in Angel Pavement, to appreciate the rotund beauty of such figures. The report is sober, succinct, luminously organised. There is a mind at work in Croydon: a mind that "feels and seeks the light." Things get done. And, gratifyingly, Croydon has not yet become, in Butler's phrase, "bored with its own success." Its Christian soldiers march ever onward. I am not sure that the report is sufficiently high-seasoned to lure the average Croydon citizen to an exhaustive perusal. Reports—and, for that matter, all publicity material—should be composed with the mingled verve and mellowness of one of Bradman's boundary hits. This one is not. But to me, a librarian—and one who does not love his avocation the less for railing at it now and again—it is exhilarating because it radiates broad-mindedness, because it is articulate of progress, and because it points the way, with no uncertain finger, to a living future.

Tanning the Hyde

Hyde. Annual Report, 1929-30.

"The work of the lending library," we are ambiguously informed, "shows a slight decrease." I trust this does not mean that the staff have taken to the traditional librarian's provender, Edgar Wallace, or are devoting their professional hours to jumper-knitting. If it only means that the issues, like Bairnsfather's old soldier, are fading away, I can well believe it. Judging, that is, by the present report. Not to put too fine a point on it, it shows no sign of imagination, enterprise or

gusto. The composition lacks the pregnant, cardinal phrase. Nowhere is there a breath of life. Reading it,

A drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk.

Hyde may possess resources, brilliant efforts of initiative. But if this report is their only record, they are indeed "sunken wrecks and sumless treasures." Desultory, niggardly publicity of this kind makes one despair of librarianship. One begins to think of it as a desolate, a back-water profession; and one says, echoing the words of *The Green Pastures*, "de sun seems to be shinin' everyplace but right yere." O Hyde, where is your Jekyll?

A Lead from Leeds

Leeds. Programme of Lectures, 1930-31.

Once more I "wreathe the rod of criticism with roses." In the wilderness of library publicity this winsome piece of printing sings as sweetly as a winter robin. And the programme itself is deserving of every praise. As a rule I am sceptical about the value of lectures, especially when, as is usually the case, they are selected for variety instead of continuity. Unless I am sadly mistaken—and I am not speaking uncharitably—no one's knowledge is enriched by them; no one experiences that mysterious quickening of the imagination which is the touchstone of education. The subjects are such as would bring tears to the eyes of an educated frog. The lecturers, as often as not, are military-looking diehards with port-winy faces and frost-bitten minds. The audience, whose motives in attending would baffle the cleverest psychiatrist unhung, applauds the witticisms and listens politely to the rest. It absorbs the runnel of information at one ear, and emits it at the other, with the impartiality of a conscientious water-reservoir. The Leeds programme, however, ought to attract more discerning listeners. Among others, Humbert Wolfe on *Wit as the basis of verse*, Albert Mansbridge on *Adult education*, Frank Rutter on *Contemporary British art*, and Graham Kerr on *Biology* are a stalwart team. This is "extension work" worthy of the name.

THE DIVISIONS MIDLAND DIVISION.

The Annual Meeting of the Midland Division was held at the Sparkhill Branch Library, Birmingham, on Wednesday, September 17th. After the minutes of the previous Divisional Meeting, at Wednesbury, May 8th, 1930, had been read and approved, the Hon. Secretary presented, on behalf of the Committee, the Annual Report for the year 1929-30. The adoption of this report was moved by Mr. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Chubb. In presenting the Annual Financial statement the Hon. Treasurer explained the difficulty of drawing up a balance sheet in view of the financial complications attendant upon the amalgamation with the L.A., and the fact that it had not been possible to make the necessary adjustments operative for this financial year. The report was adopted on the motion of Mr. Chubb, seconded by Mr. Lindsay. The Hon. Secretary announced the result of the ballot for Officers and Committee for the ensuing session:

Chairman, Miss M. G. Baker (Birmingham); Vice-Chairman, Mr. F. J. Patrick (Birmingham); Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. Revie (Birmingham); Hon. Assistant Secretary, Miss M. J. Rogers (Birmingham); Hon.

Treasurer, Mr. J. H. Davies (Birmingham); Hon. Auditor, Mr. G. L. Burton (Birmingham). Committee: Miss Atherton (Wolverhampton); Mr. H. Sargeant (Coventry), and Messrs. L. Chubb, C. M. Jackson, H. Woodbine, and V. Woods (Birmingham).

The retiring Chairman (Mr. C. M. Jackson) then welcomed his successor, Miss M. G. Baker, to the chair, and paid a tribute to the work done by Miss Baker as a member of the Divisional Committee and in particular to her services as Treasurer. Miss Baker (who is the first woman chairman of the Division) returned thanks for her election in a graceful little speech which entirely disproved the doubts which she expressed as to her ability to carry out the duties of her new office in an adequate manner. Mr. H. M. Cashmore (City Librarian, Birmingham) moved a vote of thanks to the Committee for their services during the past year, and congratulated the Committee on the record of work contained in their annual report. The Hon. Secretary outlined the suggested programme for 1930-31, and invited suggestions from the members present. Several suggestions were put forward and remitted to the Divisional Committee for their consideration. At the close of the formal business Mr. C. M. Jackson read an address entitled "Tendencies." This proved to be an exhaustive exposition of modern tendencies in library organisation, with particular reference to regionalisation and legislation. Mr. Jackson compared the public library system with the organisation and administration of our educational system, and pointed out several advantages which would accrue through being linked up with the schools and with the educational world in general. He pointed out the need for a consolidating Libraries Act, and mentioned several items which should be incorporated in any future legislation. His address was attentively received and would have been a fruitful source of discussion but for the lack of time. As it was we had to content ourselves with passing a vote of thanks moved by Mr. V. Woods, and seconded by Mr. J. H. Davies, reserving to ourselves the pleasure of discussing with Mr. Jackson some of the many controversial points raised in his paper when a suitable opportunity arose.

J. R.

NORTH EAST DIVISION.

On the invitation of Mr. R. Lillie, Borough Librarian, Middlesbrough was the centre of the Division's activities on Wednesday, October 1st, when over 60 members attended the general meeting.

In the afternoon, the visitors were welcomed by His Worship the Mayor, Ald. T. J. Kedward, J.P. (Chairman of the Public Libraries Committee), at the Constantine Technical College. Under the guidance of Dr. D. H. Ingall, the Principal, and members of his staff, a pleasant hour was spent in inspecting the College, which was very recently opened by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. The visitors then adjourned for tea, the host being His Worship The Mayor, supported by members of the Libraries Committee.

In passing a vote of thanks, Mr. I. Briggs, the Chairman, paid a tribute to the late Librarian—Mr. Baker Hudson—and spoke of the real interest he had in the Division.

The evening session was held in the Public Library. A talk was given by Mr. G. Husband, Headmaster under the Middlesbrough Education Committee, on "The Attitude towards books and knowledge of Miss Mason," founder of The Parents' National Educational Union. The subject proved one of great interest, and it was the general opinion that the speaker was all too brief. Mr. G. F. Leighton, Public Library,

Middlesbrough, addressed the members on "The Intermediate Library." His paper was one that caused discussion, and gave some of the younger members a chance to make their "maiden speech."

The session concluded with votes of thanks to Mr. Lillie and his staff, who had made every effort to make the meeting the success it was.

EXETER

The new Exeter library, replacing the old quarters for the library in the Albert Memorial building, and combining the functions of library for the City and for the University College of the South-West, was officially opened by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, on Saturday, October 11th, amidst impressive civic ceremony. In the course of his delightful speech, Lord Elgin showed, as he has many times shewn on such occasions, his deep knowledge of and concern for library progress and his very practical command of the most recent developments. He took subtle advantage of the presence of the entire City Council and most of the prominent citizens to give some salutary advice on staff and stock, and to administer a gentle but decided reproof on the omission of special provision for children in the new building. The local press seem to have entered into a conspiracy of silence on the latter subject, for a diligent search revealed no mention of his incisive remarks. It is to be hoped that the warm enthusiasm engendered amongst the Aldermen and Councillors at every mention of the staff will persist long enough to prevent them ever again advertising for a skilled palaeographer at the savagely inadequate salary of £150 a year.

The new library is a noble building, nobly planned, executed, and fitted. The architect, Mr. S. V. Greenslade (Architect of the National Library of Wales) has achieved, on a difficult corner site, a building which would grace a city five times the size and wealth of Exeter. The exterior, with sparing decoration and simple colour scheme, by reason of its harmony and austerity, is unconventional in the best sense of the word. I particularly liked the colour of the bricks used for facing, and the manner in which their quiet tones blend with the environment. The rear of the building faces the lovely Rougemont Grounds, and from most of the windows are vistas of lawns, glades, and trees, with occasional glimpses of Haldon Moor or the hills yet further beyond. Interiortly the building is admirably planned for smooth, efficient working. No trouble has been spared to make the fittings, finish, plaster-work, and other details in concord with the rest of the building. The craftsmanship, down to the smallest particular, is consummate. On the

ground floor are the reading room, lending library for 30,000 books, with a bindery employing three full-time assistants, and the muniment room for the City, installed at a cost of £9,000, to house the priceless collection of records which has been for generations inadequately stored at the rear of the Guildhall. From the ground floor a handsome teak staircase conducts to the first floor. Here there are a spacious exhibition gallery, the general reference library—a huge room, one hundred feet by fifty feet, cruciform in shape and with galleries on three sides—a special room for the Fisher library of Devon literature, three study-rooms for research workers, a clerk's room, and the City Librarian's office. I congratulate Mr. Tapley-Soper on the attainment of what has been foremost in his mind and energies for nearly thirty years, and on the magnificent opportunity which he will now have to carry on the fine work he has performed under such difficult conditions in the old building. And I look forward to congratulating him, in due course, on the inauguration of a Children's Library, which will be to the young life of Exeter what his other departments are now to the student and civic life.

NEWS OF THE WORLD

ABERDEEN.—“Aberdeen is borrowing more.” This is a newspaper headline, and not one of those cheap jokes.

DARLINGTON.—Half measures are despised at Darlington. When borrowers fail to return books, the police come to the aid of the librarian, and those who feel inclined to argue the matter find that anything they say is taken down in writing and used against them. This idea can certainly be extended. I propose that a national service for the recovering of overdue books be instituted, and that Mr. Winston Churchill, who served his apprenticeship in Sidney Street, be its first director.

DORCHESTER.—There is a vacancy for a librarian at Dorchester. The salary is 12s. 6d. per week and library experience is not essential (nor is it probable at this figure). I am always ready to put my advice at the service of authorities who make these offers, and in this case I should suggest that an aged pauper from the local workhouse would be the very person that the Dorchester Borough Council are seeking.

The gentleman to whom I am indebted for information of this opening in the profession suggests that news of it might be included in the “new comic strip.” If he, or anybody

else, can find anything to laugh about in this insulting gesture on the part of Dorchester, there is something radically wrong with his sense of humour.

DURHAM COUNTY LIBRARY.—Brave words from Durham, where men are men, etc. The County Librarian was asked by a member of the Chester-le-Street Library Committee whether any arrangement existed for the withdrawal of any book found to be objectionable. He replied in the negative, and told the Committee that, owing to the wide and varied views of the reading public, they had no right to establish a censorship.

MANCHESTER.—It is proposed by the Manchester Libraries Committee to equip a motor bus as a travelling branch library which will hold 1,200 books, and will supplement the existing branches. Is this one of the blessings or one of the curses of our machine-made civilisation?

NEWCASTLE.—The Annual Report of the Newcastle Public Libraries Committee contains the sad news that over 200 volumes have been stolen from the lending libraries during the year under review. I have never been able to understand why people steal books from libraries. If they want to read them they might just as well borrow them in the orthodox manner. If they want books to ornament their private libraries, one cannot applaud their choice, for public library books are seldom really beautiful. I have heard the suggestion made that one of the 57 varieties is really composed of an extract made from the luscious deposits on the leaves of ex-library books, and that thieves are thus afforded a ready market for their spoils.

ROCHDALE.—A curious situation has arisen at Rochdale. It appears that the Library Committee applied to the Patents Office for permission to destroy that portion of their stock of patent specifications which dates from before 1886. The Patents Office sternly refused to allow this vandalism, and instructed the Committee to despatch the documents to the Soviet Government. On first reading of this business, having spent some weeks in a basement arranging in some sort of order several tons of specifications, I thought that this action of the Patents Office was either a subtle insult to Russia, after the fashion of the barrel of tennis balls, or else an open act of war. These interpretations have not occurred to the Rochdale Committee. They see in it a plot to disclose valuable secrets to our detested trade rivals and there is going to be trouble if the *Morning Post* stands where it did. I sym-

pathise with the patriotic Committee, but I cannot understand their superlative conscientiousness in approaching the Patents Office in the first place. Have they no central heating, and have they never heard that what the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve after?

SOUTHWARK.—If the L.C.C. is generous, Southwark's Library and Museum will be enriched by the addition of the gravestones of two murderers. These relics at one time marked the last home of those unfortunates whose public execution in 1849 inspired Charles Dickens to agitate against the custom of public execution. The Library Committee perhaps is to be commended for its zeal on behalf of the local Dickens Collection, but hardly for its good taste.

OBSERVER.

OUR LIBRARY

Books to Read. A classified and annotated catalogue: being a guide for young readers in three parts. The Library Association. 10s. (Buckram, p. xviii., 574).

Good news for children's librarians, and compilers of catalogues for the young! From now on our front pages may go unsullied by A.L.O.E. in large capital letters, and we can forge straight ahead with "Abandoned." We can be unscrupulous and, what is more, we have the authority of the Library Association for doing so. In the past we have felt a little dubious of omitting what we have termed a standard author, and even though we privately admit there are some so-called standard writers who have had their day and are no longer read, we feared the critics and followed the example of our predecessors.

"Books to Read" is a pleasure to look through although, not unnaturally, it has its limitations. Although it claims to have been compiled "primarily for the use of librarians, teachers, and others concerned with the education and training of young readers, as well as for use by the readers themselves," it is my impression that first and foremost it is an ideal guide to the formation of a club library. I have in mind particularly an organisation such as the Dockland Settlement at Canning Town. "Books to Read" should go far towards the fuller development of the adolescent section, still in its very early stages, but as a guide to the formation of a children's library in the generally recognised sense of the term, it can only be useful and not by any means all-sufficing. Adolescence, is generally assumed to cover the period from about 12 to 18 years of age. I do not, however, consider that a justification for the non-appearance of Dorothy Canfield's excellent story books, A. E. Coppard's *Pink Furniture*, the school stories of Ethel Talbot—although for some mysterious reason Brenda Girvin graces the catalogue. *Why* this dearth of school stories? What has *Teddy Lester* done? I cannot believe his glamour for boys from 12 to 14 has faded. Where is the *Girl of the Limberlost* and *Freckles*? Where are Rose Fyleman's delightful plays for children? Has *Call of the Wild* been forgotten? Surely not. I rejoice to see that the *Wide, wide world* and *Peep behind the scenes* are not here. Can it be that our tears are drying up? I should, however, like to see *The Lamplighter* present.

For the adolescent the selection of books on the whole is admirable. It is pleasing to see *Good Companions* rubbing shoulders with the tried and older favourite *Green Mansions*. Then, too, it is reassuring to see Edgar Wallace. May we take it that he has now come to stay? The Committee responsible are to be congratulated on many points regarding this Catalogue, not the least of them being the manner in which they have kept abreast of this season's publications. This must be almost the first printed catalogue record of *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. Talking of War Books, I am glad to see *Undertones of War*, one of the very few one can recommend without fear of incurring a speedy death. I do not know why Gerald Bullett's *Egg Panderville* and *Nicky* are not included. Neither can I see why there should be an entry for the essays of Dr. Johnson and none for *Rasselas*. Where is that very attractive *English Literature* of Long's, and why does not Kernahan's *Reading Girl* appear under Books and Reading?

Enough of this vivisection, however. The book is a good one—a very good one. It is pleasingly printed and well produced generally. The compilers have been thoughtful and painstaking beyond words. For instance, every single entry has been numbered in the fashion of a bookseller's catalogue, and the index directs us immediately to the item for which we are searching. Where an author has been responsible for more than one work, his name is repeated and given in full for every entry—truly a luxury of which few public libraries can avail themselves. The annotations are useful and evaluative and should prove a boon to teachers contemplating the formation of school libraries. In my experience teachers are incredibly ignorant of children's books, perhaps because they are more or less experts on lesson books.

"Books to Read" is the most valuable library tool I have handled for many months. I am envious because it is not a catalogue of my own library. It deserves praise on every hand. One has only to take a share in compiling a printed catalogue of average proportions to realise the immense amount of time and patience, and, if I may say so, widenawfulness, involved for a task which at some period is bound to become monotonous.

To the Carnegie Trustees who have made this praiseworthy achievement possible we can best show our gratitude by seeing that, to the best of our ability, really adequate provision is made for the "citizens of to-morrow."

D. I. O.

How to Distinguish Prints. Written and illustrated by Members of the Print Society, and edited by Hesketh Hubbard and the Print Society. (4to. illus. p. 127). £1 1s.

This book is included in "Our Library," *pace* Mr. Snaith, as the only good thing that the bagmen have ever shown me. It is of course, or ought to be, well known to librarians in charge of reference libraries, but may have escaped the notice of smaller libraries on account of its high published price. Specialists in all branches of plate and stone printing contribute articles on their art and the book is illustrated with original prints and with micro-photographs. Foyle's are clearing the edition at 10s. 6d.

I should be glad if members who are interested would, from time to time, send notes for this column of any such bargains that come their way, in order that the large number of impecunious book collectors among the readers of the *Assistant* may share their good fortune.

T. E. C.

NEW MEMBERS

Sydney J. Marks (Watford), Ellen F. Gedge (Erith), A. S. Trayford (Paddington).

EAST ANGLIAN DIVISION : Enid E. Walker (Norwich). MIDLAND DIVISION : Marjorie F. Ward (Birmingham), Aileen L. Ashford (Leicester), Howard J. Chandler, Arthur H. Wright (Wolverhampton). NORTH-EASTERN DIVISION : Esmé R. Taylor (Newcastle Lit. & Phil. Society), Gertrude M. Alexander, Evelyn Kay, Christopher H. Jeff (Durham County). YORKSHIRE DIVISION : Bertha Bottomley (Halifax), Dorothy Wormald (Leeds).

NEW MEMBERS ATTACHED FROM THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION :—F. B. Yarker (Croydon), Miss D. Chilcot (Hendon), Raymond Downes, Ivy White (Hornsey), Alice Heaver (Islington), Kathleen D. Elphee (Kent County), Nora Harris (Univ. of London), Winifred A. Thomas (Leyton), Margaret Campbell (Oxford), Amy Ayers (W. Hartlepool), Margaret D. Jones (Bangor), E. E. Corrie (Dumfries), Elizabeth Innes, J. G. McDonald, Mary L. McNeill (Glasgow), C. H. Tomalin, K. J. C. Irving, H. V. Jordan, T. D. Crook (Reading), James Brindle (Lancs. County). MIDLAND DIVISION : T. I. M. Clulow (Leicester).

The following were held over from the October issue :—NEW MEMBERS : Doreen Quipp (Lincoln), Margaret F. Turnbull (Glasgow). MIDLAND DIVISION : Hilda D. Ball (Derbyshire County). S.E. DIVISION : Beatrice D. Adams (Worthing).

NEW MEMBERS ATTACHED FROM THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION :—Ethel Rigby, Phyllis Dale (Stoke-on-Trent), Jas. Brindle (Lancashire County).

TRANSFERS FROM TRANSITIONAL TO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION :—Miss B. M. Thirsk, Miss G. M. Law (Birmingham). Miss E. L. Sherwood (Coventry).

CORRECTION.—R. Rowsell, East Sussex County, *not* Lancs.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

BETHNAL GREEN.—Kevin Gaffney and William Meadows, to be Junior Assistants, Bethnal Green Public Library. London General Schools and London Matriculation. Salary £75.

ILFORD.—Miss D. Burroughs, Southend Libraries, to be Assistant, Ilford Central Library.

NORWICH.—Miss W. A. Tillie, A.L.A., Junior Assistant, Chiswick, to be Assistant, Norwich Public Libraries. Salary £130—£140—£155.

COUNSEL TO A YOUNG ASSISTANT

Grow up pompous, dull and placid;
Never plunge your pen in acid;
If you've thoughts inside your head,
Act as if your brain were dead;
And no one will have cause to say,
"Who's this upstart anyway?"
You'll go free of every scathe—
Not like Callander and Snaith.

S. S.

EDINBURGH PUBLIC LIBRARIES
DEPUTY LIBRARIANSHIP

The Edinburgh Public Libraries Committee are prepared to receive on or before 15th November, 1930, applications from persons of good education and professional experience who are willing to be considered for the appointment of Deputy Librarian. The salary offered is £500 a year, rising by five annual increments of £20 to a maximum of £600 a year.

A memorandum of the conditions of the appointment and a form of application may be obtained immediately from the undersigned, with whom applications, endorsed "Deputy Librarian," should be lodged.

Canvassing, either directly or indirectly, is strictly prohibited and will disqualify.

ERNEST A. SAVAGE,

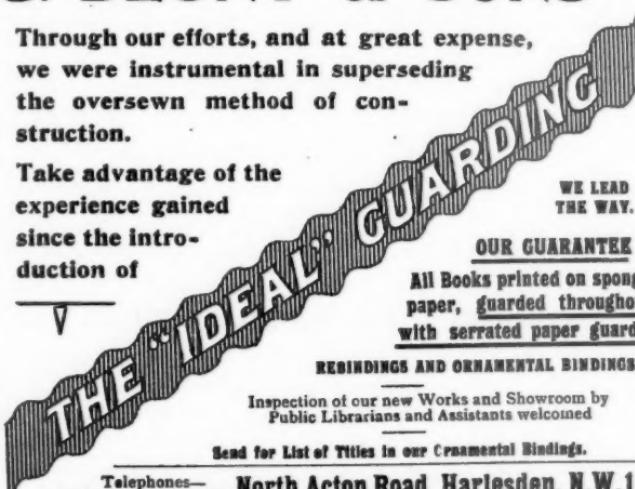
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